Tendring District Council

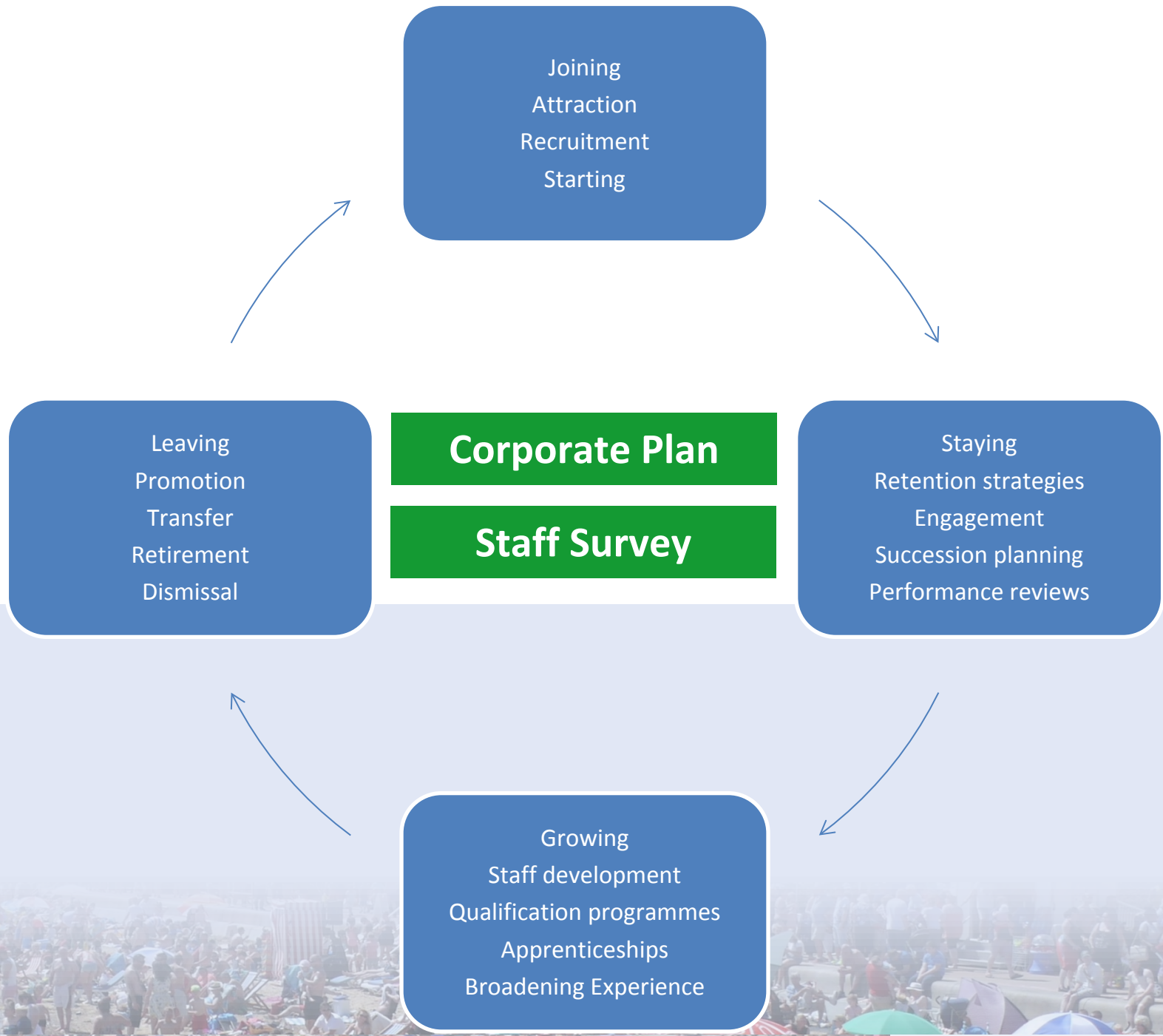# People Strategy

2022-2024

Version	4	Status	FINAL
Implementation Date	January 2022	**Review Date**	January 2023
Author	Carol Magnus	**Policy Lead**	Anastasia Simpson

Lead Officer approval and signature (Assistant Director Partnerships)	
Date signed	
Management Team Approval	
HR Committee/Officer Decision Approval	

Joining
Attraction
Recruitment
Starting

Leaving
Promotion
Transfer
Retirement
Dismissal

Corporate Plan

Staff Survey

Staying
Retention strategies
Engagement
Succession planning
Performance reviews

Growing
Staff development
Qualification programmes
Apprenticeships
Broadening Experience

Contents

1 - Introduction

"This People Strategy sets out Tendring District Council's approach and commitment to our staff for the next three years. It will run concurrently with the organisation's Corporate Plan.

It is certain that this Council will continue to experience great change over the coming years and our commitment to ensuring we have the right people, in the right place, with the right skills is paramount to our future success in helping the District to thrive.

Over the next three years the emphasis for the organisation will be to continue to focus upon the community it serves. To fulfil its commitment to keep community leadership at the heart of its practice, the organisation will continue its shift to greater transparency, increased staff engagement, devolved decision making and ongoing collaboration and innovation. Partnership working is an increasingly important part of the work we do to facilitate and encourage new working relationships and contracts for the good of all.

Major new programmes, such as the Tendring Community Borders project, Freeport East, increased investment in Jaywick Sands and many new health partnership projects as well as working closely with Sport England, have all come to the fore since the previous People Strategy was approved. Never before have we needed staff to demonstrate such an increasing ability to rapidly adapt to an ever changing environment.

Over the past four years, since the previous strategy was launched, we have changed the way in which we work so that remote working and flexible working has become embedded. This change was undoubtedly accelerated as a result of the Covid pandemic but its success was as a result of the work that had already started and to the dedication and flexibility of our workforce. Hybrid working is the commonly used phrase to describe the way we now work (part in the office and part remotely), I fully expect that by the time the next People Strategy is launched it will be so normal we'll wonder how it was ever any different.

At the time of writing the full impact of the government's Levelling Up agenda has yet to become clear. However, as always, this Council has big plans and faces many challenges. To achieve our aims and ambitions our staff will need to build upon their existing skills and knowledge and continue to adapt to different ways of working. This People Strategy underlines that commitment and its implementation sets a path for us to maintain and improve upon what has already been achieved.

The following pages detail how we intend to achieve this."

Ian Davidson, Chief Executive.

"I welcome this new People Strategy 2022 to 2024. Following the agreement of Members to adopt the Council's Corporate Plan, this People Strategy outlines how we will enable and support the workforce of the Council to meet its priorities. The changes and challenges we face over the next three years are considerable. The People Strategy sets out the priorities to ensure we have a skilled, capable and motivated workforce which is equipped and ready to face and address these challenges."

Cllr Jayne Chapman BEM, Chairman of Human Resources Committee
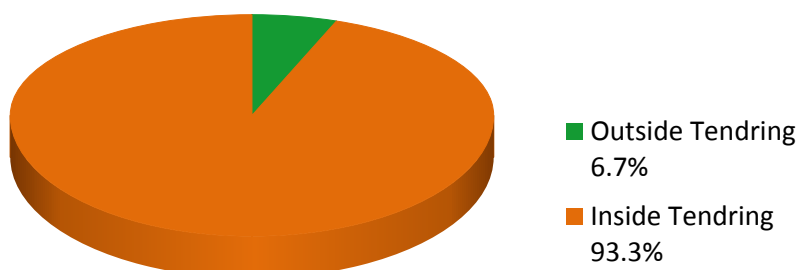
2 - Background

Tendring District Council (TDC) has an excellent reputation as a major employer within the local community. It employs 528 contracted staff as well as 199 casual or seasonal workers and 19 apprentices. More than 93% of the workforce lives within the District. Naturally, these local staff also have a personal interest in the services provided by the Council and want to see it deliver the highest possible quality.

Of the 746 staff, 382 are full time (51%) and 416 are women (56%). The Council is committed to ensuring that its entire staff receive the best opportunities for development and to providing them with the right support to succeed in their work role. This support includes a concern for the health and well-being of its staff. TDC is committed to supporting staff with disabilities and to ensuring that the ethnic diversity of the workforce reflects that of the local community.

Ratio of TDC Workforce

- Male 45%
- Female 55%

Workforce living within Tendring

- Outside Tendring 6.7%
- Inside Tendring 93.3%

Largest Age Groups

41-50

50-61

21-30
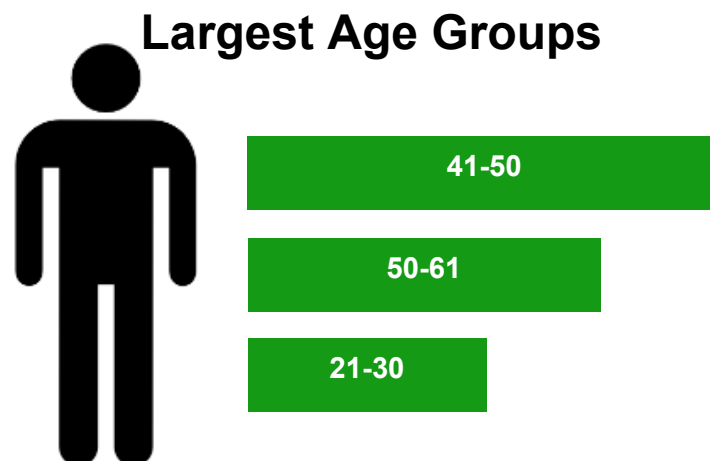
3 - Disability Profile

At the time of publication of the previous People Strategy, the Council had achieved Disability Confident Employer status. In 2018 the authority achieved the highest level of the award Disability Confidant Leader status. The council retained the award in 2021.

4 - Values

The values outlined in the Corporate Plan help to define the kind of organisation the Council wants to be, how it wants to work and how it wants to be seen. All Councillors and staff are expected to uphold, demonstrate and promote the values of personal integrity, honesty and respect for others

TDC wants the people it employs to work collaboratively both 'in-house' and with external partners; to be innovative, flexible, professional and committed to delivering excellence in public services and real benefits to the people of Tendring.

Our Values

- Councillors and Staff uphold personal integrity, honesty and respect for others
- Innovative, flexible, professional staff committed to delivering excellence
- Recognising the diversity and equality of individuals
- Working collaboratively

The organisation will make decisions which are sustainable and which reflect and promote the diversity and equality of communities and individuals.

This People Strategy will seek to ensure that the Council's values are maintained through the underpinning behaviours in its Universal Competency Framework and its application through the way it recruits, selects, develops and manages the performance of its entire staff.

5 - Joining

The process for a person to join the organisation begins at the 'attraction' stage.

<u>5.1 - Attraction</u>

Attraction is the first stage of the recruitment process. Tendring District Council will utilise its excellent 'brand reputation' as a top performing local authority to be an employer of choice for the local community and beyond. TDC will build upon its practice as a provider of flexible working conditions offering a package of benefits in addition to basic salary. Although Tendring is a less accessible geographic area than say, Colchester or Ipswich, it expects to attract staff, who are looking for a high quality work life balance and who wish to contribute to the lives of residents within the District. The organisation's shift to hybrid working and the increased ability to support remote working opens up the option for increased numbers of employees to be based outside the District. This change is also helping with retention and job satisfaction reporting.

The organisation will continually review and assess its advertising methods to ensure it is seen by the greatest potential range of applicants. Ongoing use of social media, targeted recruitment campaigns via agency and recruitment specialists as well as the continued use of more traditional means such as website, radio and professional press will all be utilised as appropriate to reach the widest possible field of potential applicants.

The process for applying for posts will be periodically reviewed to ensure that the system is as streamlined as possible and there are no unnecessary barriers for application so that processes are appropriate for the role. For some recruitment campaigns CVs will be accepted with a supporting letter.

In specialist roles where recruitment is problematic we will continue to offer 'student' opportunities for the postholder to 'earn and learn' while they train to become fully qualified. Only in exceptional circumstances will 'market forces' supplements be used.

The range of additional staff benefits will be kept under review and increased when appropriate.

<u>5.2 - Recruitment</u>

Aspects of recruitment such as application sifting, interviews and pre-start contact are led by the recruiting manager with HR administrative and advisory support. The organisation will continue to maintain a bank of staff who have been trained in interview techniques.

Interview assessment will make use of the Universal Competency Framework as well assessing technical knowledge and competence for the role. TDC has an established reputation within the County with other local authorities for excellence in practice in the delivery and analysis of psychometric testing. For its own recruitment practice the organisation will continue to use psychometrics when appropriate. Their use and analysis will be managed within the HR team.

During the period between an offer of employment and commencement in post all new starters will be encouraged to complete at least some of their essential introductory induction. This will include the use of online learning material including an introduction to the organisation and local government, Health and Safety Basics, Fire Awareness, Safeguarding and Prevent.

5.3 - Starting

The organisation will continue to use a six month probationary/induction period. During this period clear performance and development targets will be set and monitored by the manager.

A positive and successful probationary/induction period is vital. In the rare instance where performance is unsatisfactory HR will support the line manager to address the issues with the employee and, on occasions, to terminate the employment.

A mentoring programme will be introduced for new apprenticeship starts, and will also be considered to T-Level placements should the organisation start to offer these within the next three years.

When the applicant is an existing member of staff the 'Joining' process still applies. As part of 'Starting' there will still need to be a planned induction. It can be a mistake to assume that an existing employee already knows all about the organisation and its processes in relation to their new post. In addition the review stages of the first six months will also be applied and can be extended if required.

Occasionally, staff will join the organisation as a result of a TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings, Protection of Employment) arrangement. In these cases the organisation will work co-operatively with the 'handing over' employer and will endeavour to ensure that the employees concerned have a planned and structured introduction to the organisation.

6 - Staying

Historically staff retention has not presented a challenge for the organisation as the culture of local government has been one of longevity of service. Retention rates remain high across many areas of the organisation. However, recent years have seen the beginning of a shift in 'professional areas' such as HR, Environmental Health, Surveying and to a lesser extent, Planning. This change will be closely monitored and efforts will be made to pay extra careful attention to reasons for leaving so that these can be addressed where possible.

Nonetheless, a degree of turnover amongst employees is good as it provides the opportunity for new talent to join the organisation and in doing so to promote ongoing change and

development. Improved flexible working arrangements are expected to contribute to retention rates in these areas.

<u>6.1 - Retention Strategies</u>

The factors that come into play for attracting staff are also key for retaining them. Therefore the organisation will continue to develop a variety of staff benefits, promotions linked to health and well-being and flexible working. Currently the employee benefit offer includes a childcare voucher scheme, salary sacrifice car purchase scheme, cycle to work, discounted corporate gym membership and numerous discounts with local businesses.

The introduction of an Employee Assistance Programme, run by Workplace Options, for all staff and their families has been a major and important addition to the range of benefits available for staff. According to Workplace Options TDC usage rates during 2021 were higher than average when compared with other businesses. During the past year 33 cases were supported which equates to 6.28% of the workforce. Of those contacting the EAP for support, just under 82% were female. Although this figure might be representative of the fact that women are more likely to ask for help, it also presents a challenge for the organisation (with a 44% male workforce) to look at ways in which take up can be increased amongst male staff who might benefit. In addition, take up of the online resources and webinars is high with at total of 411 separate logins.

The introduction of the Shared AVC scheme is another significant new staff benefit. At the time of writing this benefit has only just been launched so it is not possible to assess its success.

For posts which are especially hard to fill due to national skill shortages the organisation will seek to work collaboratively with other local authorities and the LGA to find ways to attract and retain suitably qualified staff. In highly exceptional circumstances the organisation may consider the use of a special honorarium payment as a retention incentive.

The organisation will continue to foster good working relations with its recognised union, UNISON. The Council is fully supportive of staff rights to utilise union membership and will continue to promote this part of its employee relations strategy.

<u>6.2 – Engagement</u>

The extent to which staff feel able to influence their working life and to manage the demands of their role, to be heard, able to take responsibility and have the opportunity to influence change greatly affects retention. Staff engagement will therefore be a continuing priority.

TDC has worked hard to improve internal communications and staff inclusion through the increased use of Video Blogs, staff newsletters and communications updates. The use of staff 'pulse' surveys during the pandemic have shown that the improved communications have been effective but there is still more that can be done. The organisation's Communications Strategy was approved in DATE and a supplementary internal communications strategy will be launched in 2022.

The annual staff recognition event, 'Stars' will continue as a means to recognise the ongoing hard work, dedication and excellence of its Officers

6.3 - Succession Planning

Staff turnover rates for TDC are approximately 6.3% which is 9.5% below the national public sector average*. With turnover comes not only a loss of people but also a loss of knowledge and, for a time at least, skills. To ameliorate this, the organisation has started to actively develop a succession planning approach. The aim will be to ensure that knowledge and skills are sufficiently shared so that any vacancy (including any caused by long term sickness) can be covered smoothly and efficiently. Acting Up opportunities are being utilised increasingly and this trend is expected to increase. Recent opportunities for acting up when a member of staff has taken flexible retirement have provided potential successors the opportunity to gain experience whilst being mentored by the 'retiree'. Restructures remain a constant feature as the organisation responds to ever changing demands. Restructures now include a progression path so that staff can see how their career can develop.

*Labour turnover rates: 2021 XpertHR survey reports the average Public Sector turnover rate is 15.8%

6.4 - Performance Review

Although structured development opportunities play a key role in growing our staff and skills, most learning takes place in the workplace 'on the job'. As such, the practice of carrying out regular one-to-one meetings for reflection, target setting, review and on-going development coaching will continue to be a key plank of the strategy for enabling staff to grow in skills and confidence. Performance review (or appraisal), as a summative practice to review the past twelve months and to set targets for the coming twelve months will continue. The documentation for recording of reviews has been updated and is designed to show a clearer link through to the organisation's over-arching priorities and Corporate Plan. The form can be downloaded from Ping!.

Occasionally people struggle in their role and need extra support or structure to succeed. To help facilitate this, managers will be encouraged to use coaching and mentoring skills in the workplace and to pro-actively monitor and manage performance. HR will provide professional
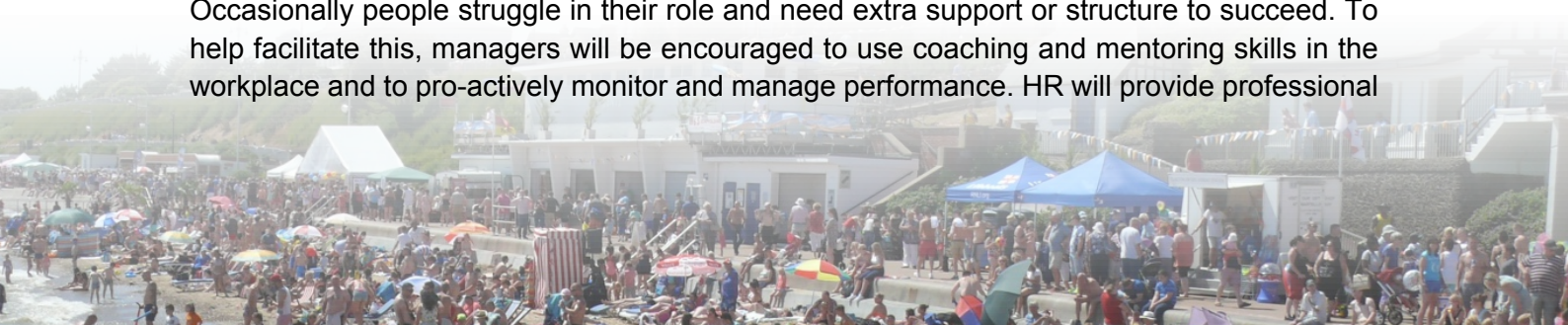
advice and guidance to managers but early intervention by managers will be expected to address issues and minimise the need for more formal approaches. Managers will be reminded about the Universal Competency Framework (UCF) adopted by the Council and its use in identifying and managing performance issues.

7 - Growing

7.1 - Staff Development

TDC is fully committed to ensuring that all of its employees have access to learning opportunities to improve their technical and 'soft skills'. Over the past four years there has been a significant shift from a focus on face to face learning to more online approaches via webinars and elearning programmes. This has been accelerated as a result of the Covid pandemic and the re-balanced approach is expected to become embedded with all three approaches being used in roughly equal measure.

The organisation's elearning platform was re-vamped in 2018 but with partial success. In 2022 the organisation will commission and launch a new partnership with a professional provider and developer of elearning. It is expected that this will become the primary source for introductory courses on managerial and 'soft' skills. Online learning for health and safety and compliance courses has been very successful and this will continue.

Face to face training will continue to be a feature of all staff development but it expected that this will mainly be used when subjects are complex or highly interactive. Webinars will be commissioned for intermediate level courses.

Managers will be given the opportunity to develop coaching skills as a standard part of their line management practice.

The organisation will continue to be an active member of the VineHR Partnership and will utilise the training opportunities it provides whenever possible.

7.2 - Broadening Experience

Opportunities for secondment, job swap and acting up will continue to be used whenever possible. TDC will seek to establish these opportunities not only 'in-house' but also with other authorities or partner agencies where appropriate. This will enable employees to see alternative ways of working, experience different environments and bring a fresh perspective and new skills to their own role.

7.3 - Qualification Programmes

The 'Grow Our Own' approach for staff to gain professional qualifications in hard to recruit areas will continue The organisation's sponsorship programme for qualifications will continue and apprenticeships will be utilised whenever possible. Apprenticeships up to and including Level 7 (post graduate level) are increasingly available and can currently be funded via the organisation's Levy or from the government's co-investment scheme.

7.4 .1 - Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships have become and will remain a vital part of staff development. Since the government reforms of the apprenticeship programme in 2017 the organisation has made increased use of this career development pathway. The organisation will continue to utilise Career Track as its main provider of Level 2 and 3 apprenticeship qualifications. It will use other suitable training providers for technical and higher level professional apprenticeships. To date the organisation has utilised apprenticeships at all levels from 2 up to 7 and this strategy will continue. A number of staff have now gained degrees and at the time of writing two are studying for a Masters Degree under the apprenticeship scheme.

In areas where recruitment is difficult the organisation's 'grow our own' approach will continue and an apprenticeship pathway from Level 2 to Level 6 will be identified. The approach has been successfully piloted in the legal department and in the surveying team. This approach will be rolled out to other areas during the next three years.

7.4.2 Career Track

Tendring District Council is an approved apprenticeship training provider in its own right and is registered with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to deliver a number of apprenticeship training programmes. As an approved training provider, Career Track (TDC) is subject to inspection from Ofsted.

TDC's apprenticeship training department is known as Career Track. Career Track was founded in 1983 and is a fundamental lynch-pin for the organisation's approach to staff development.

Career Track has expanded steadily since the previous People Strategy was published. It now provides apprenticeship programmes for a number of local authorities within Essex and beyond as well as for private sector providers and the NHS. 36% of its apprentices are within TDC.

Over the next three years the Career Track service will further modernise with the introduction of electronic portfolios and the launch of OneFile. An increased focus on skills, behaviours and knowledge within the curriculum will result in a change of emphasis. During 2022 and 2023 the department will invest additional time and resources to ensure that all its client managers and apprentice supervisors have a full understanding of the changes and of their role in supporting the learners. Within the next 18 months there is a commitment to continuously improve teaching and training knowledge, skills and performance of the Career Track team.

Continuous professional development is aligned with Career Track's existing apprenticeship offer and will continue to be monitored and recorded alongside the current quality improvement plan.

In 2022 Career Track will establish a new Governance Board to provide oversight and quality and compliance monitoring of the service. This new Board will also oversee the ongoing growth and development of the service as a corporate priority for improving education and work opportunities within the district.

The Career Track vision and mission statement can be viewed in Appendix 1 of this document.

7.5 –Safeguarding, Prevent and Cyber Security

Tendring District Council has a legal and moral duty to ensure the safeguarding of all its staff (including apprentices, casual and temporary employees). The organisation has an appointed safeguarding lead and a detailed policy for how it will ensure its responsibilities are met.

As part of this commitment the ongoing programme of Safeguarding and Prevent training will be expanded and deepened. A policy focussing explicitly regarding the safeguarding of under 18s will be developed and additional training will be provided to all staff and volunteers who work with under 18s.

Prevent and anti-terrorism training will be provided as mandatory training for all employees and an annual refresher will be a requirement for, at a minimum, staff engaged in supporting large scale public events such as the Clacton Airshow.

The organisation's increased and increasing reliance upon digital technology exposes it to increased risk of cyber attack from numerous sources. Although the organisation has business continuity plans in place it is right to work on a basis that 'prevention is better than cure'. Therefore an increased emphasis will be placed on cyber security awareness training for all staff and as required, more detailed training will be provided for those who work in aspects of the organisation seen to be a greatest risk. This will be an ongoing programme.

8 - Leaving

The vast majority of people who leave the organisation are going on to another job. From leaving forms and exit interviews, it appears that the most common reason is career development or salary. Approximately 90% of all leavers part on good terms, ensuring that the opportunity to return at some later date remains an option. To further support the practice of 'parting well' and of being a 'learning organisation', the practice of exit interviews will continue.

As staff leave and go on to other employment, often having gained a more responsible role, we can view this as a compliment. It is a testimony to our staff development and professional expertise. It demonstrates that other employers consider Tendring to be a reputable employer. In addition, it consequently provides new employment and development opportunities for our staff and new entrants.

When the parting is not good and the leaver is disillusioned with the organisation then an exit interview with an independent manager is especially important for the organisation to learn from the circumstances and possibly address their concerns and so part on better terms.

8.1 - Transfer and Promotion

When staff move within the organisation as part of personal development and/or promotion, they are treated as a transferee. Dependent upon the circumstances an exit interview from their former role, may be appropriate.

Promoted staff will be provided with an induction programme and will have regular reviews throughout their first six months in post using the probationary period 'model'. In addition, staff
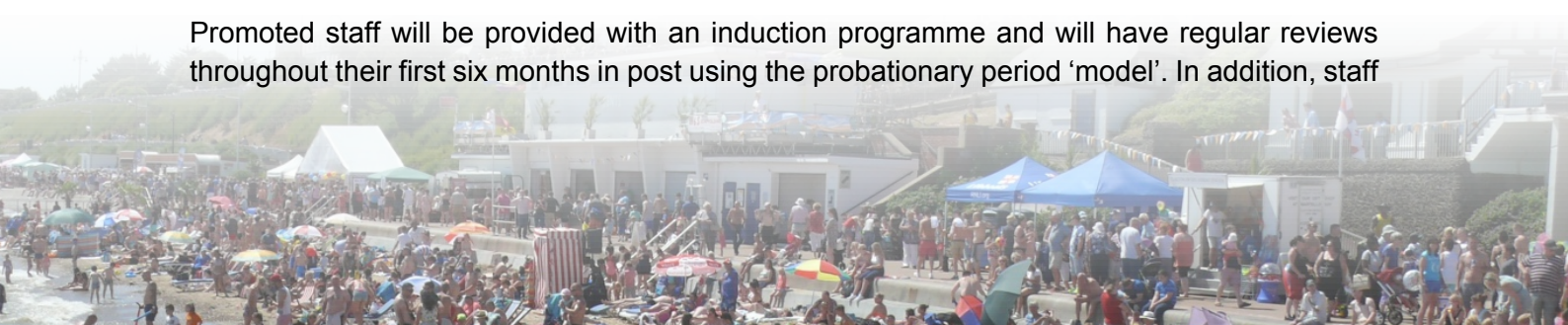
will be actively encouraged to seek an appropriate coach or mentor from either within or outside the organisation.

Occasionally staff may leave the organisation as the result of a TUPE transfer to another employer. In these cases, whenever possible, the organisation will work closely with the 'receiving' employer to support as smooth a hand over. The Council's HR department will leads on this in conjunction with the relevant senior manager(s) and will also keep the staff that are affected informed about the process and will consult with them as appropriate.

8.2 - Dismissal

On rare occasions employees leave due to capability or conduct issues. The organisation will apply a simultaneously empathetic and robust approach to the management of long-term sickness and poor performance. Managers continue to be given the necessary training and support to manage these issues and will continue to be supported by HR. Dismissal due to capability or conduct will always be used as an action of last resort.

The organisation is committed to retaining its staff but recognises that on occasion it may be necessary to restructure to ensure the Council is able to deliver its services effectively and is cost efficient. This may mean that occasionally staff will leave due to redundancy. At all times the organisation will seek to avoid compulsory redundancy and, in cases where posts are lost, will try to come to a mutually agreed solution that might, on occasion, include some element of voluntary redundancy.

8.3 - Retirement

Staff are entitled to continue working for as long as they wish, providing that they are capable of performing their duties. Over the past four years an increased trend has been noticed with staff seeking to utilise the staff benefit of Flexible Retirement. Flexible Retirement is a discretionary benefit enabling staff to reduce their working hours and take their retirement benefits. This approach enables the employee to begin adjusting to a different work/life balance and the organisation to implement succession planning ready for the staff member to take full retirement when they are ready. On average, staff who take flexible retirement remain in employment for a further five years, working two or three days per week. The length of time that staff remain does, of course, vary but with an average of five years it demonstrates this this is seen as an attractive benefit and means by which knowledge and skills are retained.

Although the organisation has 38 staff who will reach their state retirement age between 2022 and 2025, the past five years have shown that retirement has not posed the level of disruption that was anticipated. This appears to be due to a number of factors: some staff have continued working past their state retirement age (26 in total) some have left in advance and others have either reduced their hours or reduced their hours via the Flexible Retirement Scheme. Overall, the organisation's approach and support for staff as they move from work to retirement has been successful.

To further enhance the organisation's offer, retirement planning webinars will be commissioned to cover issues such as financial planning, lifestyle changes and health and wellbeing in older age.

9 - Support for Volunteers

9.1 – Volunteers

Volunteers within TDC will receive the training and induction they require for their role, a written job role outlining their responsibilities and duties and will be asked to sign a written volunteering agreement. Volunteers will have the opportunity to have a regular catch up meeting with their line manager and an annual review.

Volunteering roles within Public Realm and the Princes Theatre will continue to be expanded and opportunities for volunteering within the wider organisation will be further explored. The area most likely to expand will be within tourism and leisure.

9.2 - Contractors

In accordance with the contracting standards practised by the Council, TDC will seek to ensure that, wherever possible, those companies with which it holds contracts have standards and procedures for its people management and development that comply with employment legislation and best practice.

10 - Quality and Effectiveness Monitoring

TDC is committed to ensuring that it monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of its People Strategy. It will achieve this through a number of routes to gather a combination of 'hard' and 'soft' data. The key approaches are listed below.

10.1 LGA Peer Review

In DATE the organisation participated in the LGA Peer Review Scheme. The results of the rigorous review provided constructive feedback on the organisation's areas of strength and areas for improvement. This in turn has influenced the strategic direction and planning of the Council and is reflected within its revised Corporate Plan and published Priorities. Although no date has yet been set for the next review, it is expected that it will take place within the next two to three years.

10.2 - Staff Engagement Survey

The Covid Pandemic meant has resulted in a delay to the Staff Engagement Survey and it will be scheduled in 2022. The survey will be carried out by Dr martin Reddington and Associates. By using the Employee Value Proposition survey undertaken by this team responses remain completely confidential and anonymous as data is only seen by the surveyor and no individual responses are ever reported back to TDC. In addition by using this particular survey, the organisation is able to benchmark its results with those of other local government organisations through the Local Government Association.

During 2020/21 the organisation carried out two 'pulse' surveys with the principle aim of understanding, and acting upon, staff morale and sense of wellbeing as a consequence of the Pandemic and working under very different circumstances either at home or in the office.
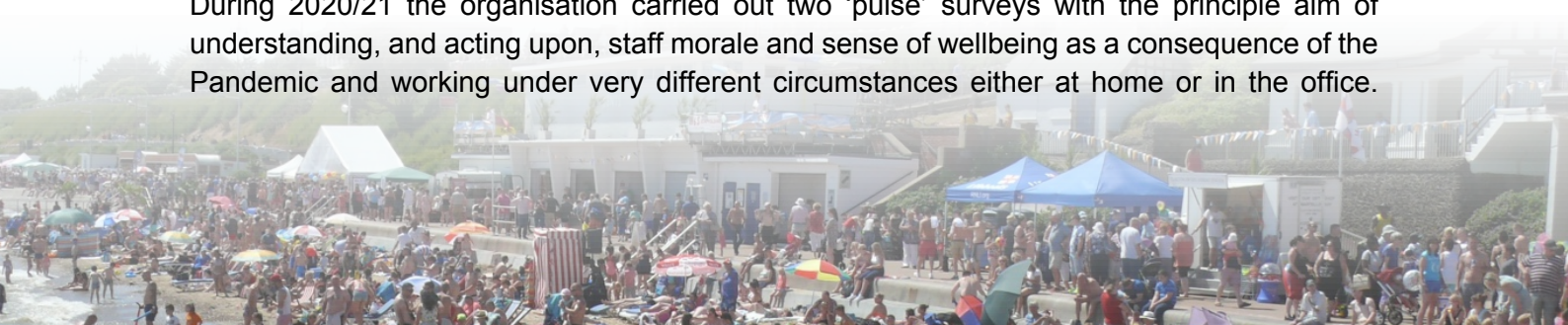
Overall, staff welfare remained positive and actions were able to be taken to address the concerns of those who were struggling, particularly with isolation and/or anxiety.

10.3 - HR Metrics

HR will continue to monitor the demographics of the organisation, turnover and sickness rates and performance management and reviews. The planned introduction of new HR software in 2023 is expected to provide enhanced facilities for data analysis of the workforce.

10.4 - Performance Monitoring

The organisation already sets itself challenging performance targets for the delivery of its services. This will continue and will be monitored via the Scrutiny procedures.

10.5 - The Stories That Are Told

Anecdotal data blended with statistical data is a powerful measure. The stories that are told within the organisation about itself and how it has changed or is changing can provide effective human interest 'soft' feedback.

Appendix

Career Track Mission and Vision Statement

Appendix 1

Career Track Vision and Mission Statement

Vision

Our vision is to be recognised as a 'Good' provider of apprenticeships; engaging learners in the development of workplace knowledge, skills and behaviours that enable them to actively contribute to the economic, health and social wellbeing of the district.

Mission

- To educate, engage and inspire
- To inform, advise, support and mentor
- To establish and maintain high quality standards in apprenticeship training
- To safeguard and promote the welfare of our learners