HUMAN RESOURCES & COUNCIL TAX COMMITTEE

28 JULY 2025

REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR - PEOPLE

A.3 PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT UPDATE REPORT

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To provide Members of the Human Resources and Council Tax Committee with an update on the Council's current position regarding the training and development of its workforce.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of this report is to provide Members with an overview of current people development activities across the Council, key achievements, emerging priorities, and future plans. This programme supports our strategic aim to build a skilled inclusive and motivated workforce, whilst ensuring our staff are in the best possible position as we prepare them for the transition through the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

The training and development statistics provided within this report are based on the past year, i.e. 1st July 2024 to 30th June 2025. Training identified will be a combination of mandatory training, employees requesting additional support through learning, and managers recommendations for their team members.

Apprenticeships

The Council offers apprenticeship training through the use of our successful Career Track programme, but also through the use of external providers where qualifications need to be gained in specialist areas of work. These currently include:

- Level 2 Leisure Team Member
- Level 2 Horticulture Construction Operative
- Level 2 Digital Marketing
- Level 3 CIPD Learning and Development

Further apprenticeship courses are available through the use of the Government's Apprenticeship Levy. This levy funding was incorporated into law by Part 6 of the Finance Act 2016, and came into effect on 6 April 2017. As a larger employer, the Council is able to access these Government funds for apprenticeships through our Apprenticeship Service Account. This account creates a funding amount through a levy fund based on the Council's pay bill and contributions to HMRC, which we can either:

- Spend on our own apprenticeship training and assessment costs; or
- Transfer up to 50% of the funds to another employer known as levy sharing, or levy transfer.

The Council chooses not to share or transfer the funding available, and ensures that 100% of the levy funding is invested into our own employees through apprenticeship training, and in some cases accesses transferable levy funds from other organisations. There is a dedicated list of apprenticeships which can be accessed using the levy fund, and this information is regularly accessed and shared with managers to ensure the courses are utilised wherever possible.

The Council is committed to making full use of our allocated Government levy fund, with 100% of the available funding actively being invested in workforce development through these available apprenticeships. This approach ensures that resources are being used efficiently to enhance our employees' skills, improving service delivery, and contributing to staff development and retention. The Council remains committed to leveraging every opportunity to support learning and development across its service areas, thus providing cost effective training without impacting Council budgets.

Current reports state that with effect from January 2026 the existing Government levy funding for Level 7 apprenticeships will cease for anyone aged 22 and over. As a result, the Council is ensuring that any employees who would like to undertake one of the funded Level 7 apprenticeships is identified, in order to utilise the levy fund while it is still available.

E-Learning and Development

The Council currently has two e-learning platforms, each offering a variety of online training courses accessible to our staff via the Council's Intranet. The systems are called iHasco and Skillgate, and each platform offers the opportunity for staff to search for relevant training, complete the course online at a time that suits them, and attain a pass mark and for some courses, a certificate. The e-learning platforms allow employees to access high-quality content and enables self-paced learning which can be incorporated into their working day. This is also a cost-effective way to deliver a high number of courses in varying subject areas, to meet the needs of our services across the organisation. This method of training also allows us to monitor and analyse employee engagement and access.

The courses available are easily accessible and support the continuous professional development of our workforce. The iHasco e-learning platform specialises in offering training relating to health, safety and wellbeing, whereas the Skillgate e-learning platform is more focused on improving skills and knowledge.

Skillgate and iHasco are used to deliver our mandatory training courses to our employees, allowing us to ensure we maintain a compliant workforce, remaining up to date with ever-changing legislation and best practice. Employees receive regular email reminders from the e-learning systems until the mandatory courses have been completed.

iHasco E-Learning Data	
Total number of courses completed during this period:	2,635
Total number of different types of courses accessed:	67
Of those, number of mandatory training courses completed: • Sexual Harassment Awareness	606

• Fire Awareness • Essential Health and Safety Training • Environmental Awareness	205 195 138

Skillgate E-Learning Data	
Total number of courses completed during this period:	2,379
Total number of different types of courses accessed:	345
Of those, number of mandatory training courses completed: • Understanding the Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Adults Level 1 and 2 • Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity • Environmental Awareness at Work • Lone Working Safety for Home and Remote Workers	 405 376 369 364

Sponsored Qualification Training

As a Council we actively sponsor our staff to gain professional qualifications aligned with their roles, personal development and aspirations. Through structured training programmes, funding support, and dedicated time for learning, we are able to support our employees in developing their expertise and progress their careers. We are keen to nurture our existing staff through the use of targeted training to enable them to progress within career progression pathways, support succession planning and encourage staff retention.

Sponsored qualification training courses which have either completed in the past year, or are within a current period of study include:

- Msc Environmental Health x 2
- Msc Town and Country Planning x 2
- Access to HE Diploma
- AEA Foundation Course x 3
- Higher Certificate in Food Control
- AAT Level 3
- Level 3 Certificate in Housing x 2
- Level 4 Certificate in Housing
- Msc Emergency Planning
- CIH Housing Certificate in Practice
- Data Protection
- Bsc Access Module x 2
- Level 7 Total Leadership
- PACE Interviewing

All staff have the opportunity to apply to undertake a qualification sponsored by the Council. A Qualification Sponsorship Application Form must be completed and submitted outlining why the qualification is essential for their role, and how undertaking the course will support the strategic and operational priorities. Section A of the application is completed by the employee, outlining how the qualification will support the competencies for their role and benefit their service area.

Section B is completed by the employees Senior Manager or Assistant Director, endorsing how the requested qualification will meet the development needs of the employee and the service objectives.

All requests are considered on the merit of their application, the business need of the Council and the training budget available. Those that are successful enter into a legally binding Training Agreement with the Council. The agreement states that an employee will be asked to reimburse the Council for the training costs should they fail to complete the course, or terminate their employment within 2 years of completion of their qualification. This agreement acts as incentive to gain commitment from the employee whilst protecting public funds.

The Council's current training and development programme plays a vital role in supporting Principle E of the Annual Governance Statement 2023–24: 'Developing the Council's entity, including the capacity of its leadership and the individuals within it'. Through the use of a planned and structured training programme and continuous professional development, the Council ensures that our staff are equipped with the skills, knowledge, and capabilities needed to deliver a high standard of service. This investment in our workforce strengthens the Council's resilience, supports succession planning, and underpins good governance practices across the Council.

Workforce Development

The Council is firmly committed to investing in the growth, capability, and career progression of our workforce. We recognise that empowering staff through continuous training and development is fundamental to continuing to deliver high-quality services and fostering a resilient workforce who feel confident as we prepare for LGR. In addition to e-learning and apprenticeships, the following training courses have been delivered between 1st July 2024 and 30th June 2025:

- Mental Health First Aid Training
- Mental Health First Aid Refresher Training
- Strategic Emergency Management Course
- PLPO Training
- Professional Boundaries Training
- Customer Care Excellence
- Freedom of Information Practical Training
- CSAS Training
- Vehicle Examination Training
- MBTI Team Development for Sports and Leisure
- Effective Complaint Handling
- Mediation Training
- Sexual Harassment Training for Managers

People Strategy Priorities

The Council's People Strategy 2024 – 2029 sets out the Council's aims for the support and development of its staff for the 5-year period. The Strategy aims to compliment the Corporate Plan and the organisations key objectives and priorities.

Workforce Planning

The People Development Manager is currently undertaking one-to-one meetings with Assistant Directors to review their structures, teams, identify critical roles and undertake skills gaps analysis. This review also ensures that career grades are being monitored whilst considering succession planning.

As LGR will be guiding our organisation into a unitary authority over the next 3 years, consideration is being given to this timescale when considering the length of qualification training courses and career progressions.

In response to ongoing recruitment challenges in key service areas such as Planning and Environmental Health, the Council is committed to a 'grow our own' approach to reduce our dependency on agency staff. The use of external agencies can be a drain on corporate budgets, and by investing in our people, we aim to build a more stable, skilled, and cost-effective workforce that can meet the longer-term needs of the organisation. It is therefore essential that where Career Grade Schemes are linked to a specific job role, that the employee in post is encouraged through their performance appraisals, to develop their skills and qualifications to progress through the grade range.

Career Grade Schemes are widely used through the organisation, empowering our staff to grow within their roles whilst increasing their contribution to their service. There are currently 389 posts across the Council which have Career Grades Schemes attached to the job description and grade range. The schemes link clear criteria, through either gaining additional competencies and skills or by gaining qualifications, to motivate staff to continuously improve and progress. Offering clear pathways of career advancement, encourages staff to work towards their own progression within their roles, and encourages staff retention. This approach not only motivates and retains talent, but also helps to cultivate the next generation of local government officers and leaders.

Future Initiatives

It is essential that over the next 3 years, we continue to work closely with senior management to create a skilled and resilient workforce, who are able to react positively to the impending changes in Local Government. By promoting continuous learning and development, we aim to prepare employees for the evolving roles and opportunities ahead, ensuring that as an organisation, our workforce are able to adapt to the changes, whilst being attentive to staff welfare as we support them through any transitional challenges.

Through the use of Career Grade Schemes and continued investment in skills and qualifications, we aim to improve staff retention, reduce turnover, retain talent and increase loyalty. We aim to ensure that staff, with the potential to progress, are given those opportunities, within our financial parameters.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that:

(a) The content of this People Development Update report be noted.

REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION(S)

To ensure the Human Resources and Council Tax Committee remain updated on the corporate training and development of our workforce. Providing regular updates will allow Members to gain a greater understanding of career progression, training available, succession planning and preparation for LGR.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

There are no alternative options to be considered as this report provides an update for Members.

It is good practice to ensure Members of the Human Resources and Council Tax Committee remain updated on our corporate staff training and development, to assist them in making informed decisions regarding the Council's workforce.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

A revised Corporate Plan and Vision was approved by Full Council at its meeting on 28 November 2023. One of the six included themes is Financial Sustainability and Openness, with a commitment to continue to deliver effective services and get things done whilst looking after the public purse; that means carefully planning what we do, managing capacity and prioritising what we focus our time, money and assets on.

The Council's People Strategy 2024-2029 underpins the Council's priorities by ensuring that:

- the organisation complies with the legislative and best practice requirements for employment;
- managers are appropriately knowledgeable and skilled in people management in addition to their professional expertise;
- Human Resources and Organisational Development practitioners are appropriately skilled and qualified to provide professional advice and guidance on operational and strategic development and practice;
- the behaviours valued by the organisation are clear and demonstrated in practice. These behaviours include acting with integrity, honesty, respect, professionalism, inclusion, collaboration, innovation, personal, and mutual accountability.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS (including legislation & constitutional powers)

The Human Resources & Council Tax Committee has responsibility for the discharge of Part II – miscellaneous functions as set out in Schedule 1 to the Local Authorities (*Functions and Responsibilities)* (*England*) Regulations 2000 (*as amended*) and as detailed in Appendix 1 to Part 3 of the Constitution; including the 'decision-making on key Human Resource and Personnel issues not reserved by the Council or delegated to officers'.

It is therefore important that the Committee are provided with regular updates regarding the training and development of the Council's workforce, to assist Members in making informed decisions regarding the Council's workforce.

FINANCE AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Any training courses requested and delivered will be approved in line with the allocated Organisational and Development annual budget. The People Development team will ensure that the Council continues to utilise the funding available via the Government Levy to fund the delivery of relevant apprenticeship courses.

USE OF RESOURCES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

The Best Value Duty relates to the statutory requirement for local authorities and other public bodies defined as best value authorities in Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999 ("the 1999 Act") to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness". In practice, this covers issues such as how authorities exercise their functions to deliver a balanced budget (Part 1 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992), provide statutory services and secure value for money in all spending decisions.

The following are submitted in respect of the indicated use of resources and value for money indicators:

A) Financial sustainability: how the body plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;	To support financial sustainability, the Council manages resources efficiently to ensure safe, effective service delivery. Any training requests are carefully considered and monitored to ensure delivery and costs sit within the allocated budget framework.
B) Governance: how the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks, including; and	The Council ensures strong governance through informed decision-making, effective risk management, and alignment with legal requirements. Legally binding Training Agreements are in place where qualification training has been sponsored by the Council. This minimises the financial risk, and allows the Council to claim back training costs should the employee fail to complete the qualification or terminate their employment with the Council within 2 years of completion of the qualification.
C) Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: how the body uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.	The Council uses data and performance insights to enhance service delivery. The People Development function works to ensure that 100% of the available Government Levy is utilised to deliver apprentices to the Council's workforce.

MILESTONES AND DELIVERY

The Workforce Data Report will follow the timeline below:

- Management Team – 15 July 2025
- Human Resources and Council Tax Committee – 28 July 2025

ASSOCIATED RISKS AND MITIGATION

This report provides an update on the training and development of our staff. Part of that delivery is through the use of sponsored qualification training, which requires a financial investment by the Council over a period of up to 4 years. This poses a risk through providing a financial investment where the employee may either fail to complete the course, or might terminate their employment within 2 years after the qualification has been gained. This risk is mitigated through the use of a legally binding Training Agreement that the employee enters into with the organisation, prior to funding being committed. This allows the Council to reclaim funds which have been paid to cover the qualification training costs.

Mitigating such risks supports the Council's legal compliance, employee retention, and operational resilience.

OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The People Development team work closely with the local UNISON Branch Executive to ensure staff are afforded equal access to training, development and career progression.

EQUALITIES

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 establishes the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which requires public authorities, including the Council, to have due regard to the need to:

(a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
(b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
(c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

The protected characteristics under the Act are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership is also a protected characteristic, but it is only relevant to the duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination.

The Council is committed to being an inclusive and supportive employer in all its people practices, and raising awareness within its workforce with 376 employees undertaking Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity training, and 606 completing the Sexual Harassment Awareness training in the past year.

SOCIAL VALUE CONSIDERATIONS

Social Value is defined through the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 and requires all public sector organisations (and their suppliers) to look beyond the financial cost of a contract

and consider how the services they commission and procure might improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of an area.

The People Development Update report outlines how the organisation works positively to promote growth and development opportunities within our workforce, whilst ensuring staff have access to opportunities to improve and develop their knowledge and skills.

IMPLICATIONS RELATED TO DEVOLUTION AND/OR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

By undertaking skills gaps analysis, monitoring career grade progressions and promoting training and development, the People Development team are working closely with Assistant Directors to ensure their teams are in the best possible position, as we transition through the implementation of LGR in Greater Essex.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S AIM TO BE NET ZERO BY 2050

Consideration has been given to the Councils aim to be net zero by 2050, and there is no direct implication related to the content of this report.

OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS

Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.

Crime and Disorder	Not applicable
Health Inequalities	By encouraging staff development and employee retention using inclusive practices, this report supports fairness across the workforce.
Subsidy Control (the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and the related Statutory Guidance)	This report does not involve the provision of financial assistance or confer any economic advantage to external organisations; therefore, subsidy control considerations are not applicable in this instance.
Area or Ward affected	Not Applicable

ANY OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

None.

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

In line with the Council's People Strategy and the corporate objectives, this People Development Update report aims to provide transparency, foster accountability, and ensure

alignment between workforce development initiatives and the Council's service delivery priorities.

As we navigate a period of organisational change and transformation approaching LGR, it is essential that Members are fully informed of how staff development, training investment, and talent management strategies are being implemented. This report updates Members on the training and development delivery over the past year, being the period of the 1st July 2024 to 30th June 2025, including:

- e-learning courses
- mandatory compliance training courses
- sponsored qualification training
- development training courses
- apprenticeships

The focus of people development is to strengthen the Council's capacity, retain critical skills, and support staff wellbeing.

The Committee's oversight ensures that people development remains a strategic priority and is responsive to both internal workforce needs, and the broader challenges facing the Council over the next 3 years.

PREVIOUS RELEVANT DECISIONS TAKEN BY COUNCIL/CABINET/COMMITTEE ETC.

Workforce Update Reports have been previously submitted to the Human Resources and Council Tax Committee, and further People Development Update reports will be provided on a regular basis to ensure Members remain updated and informed.

A Workforce Update Report was submitted at the meeting of the Human Resources and Council Tax Committee on 24th February 2025, which outlined the Councils current workforce statistics compared to National averages and those within the Tendring District. This report provided a detailed breakdown of the Council's employee profile, and as a result this data has not been included within the People Development Update report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PUBLISHED REFERENCE MATERIAL

None.

APPENDICES

None.

REPORT CONTACT OFFICER(S)	
Name	**Marcia Fuller**
Job Title	**People Development Manager**
Email/Telephone	**mfuller@tendringdc.gov.uk**