

# **Bromsgrove District Council**

## **Human Resources and Organisation Development Strategy**

### **1 Introduction**

Employees of Bromsgrove District Council are our most valuable asset. Human Resources (HR) Management and Organisation Development (OD) makes a key contribution towards the strategic direction of the Council, Council Plan and Council Approach.

This HR and OD strategy sets out the approach that Bromsgrove District Council is going to take to ensure that we have employees with the right skills, in the right place, at the right time to enable the organisation to deliver our Strategic Purposes. To enable the authority to move forward and to continue to deliver services in the most effective way, it is essential that we continue to review and develop the way the organisation operates. This includes:

- ensuring that we have an appropriate organisation culture (“the way we do things around here”);
- better use of resources aligned to business needs;
- shared services structures which facilitate more flexible working;
- underpinned by a focus on the wellbeing of our employees.

This corporate strategy should be read in conjunction with the Council Plan.

The role of Human Resources and Organisation Development (HR and OD) is to provide professional support and leadership around delivery of its component parts. It is recognised that ultimately line managers are responsible for the competence, performance, development and health and wellbeing of their employees.

HR and OD are pivotal in enabling the delivery of Strategic Purposes and developing the organisation to meet the needs of our customers. Working in partnership with strategic and operational management the HR and OD team can support the effective use of employee resources now and for the future. At a strategic level, by understanding the links between organisational success and the role that employees play, HR and OD can help improve performance. At an operational level the HR and OD team supports successful delivery of services by providing advice, information and guidance that is both practical and user friendly, to both employees and managers.

Building and maintaining good employee relationships through collaborative working with Trade Unions and other partners is essential for organisational effectiveness and the delivery of this strategy.

Underpinning many of the elements of this HR and OD strategy is a requirement for excellent communication throughout the organisation. Without this we are unlikely to achieve our aim of moving forward and being able to deliver our strategic purposes. To attain excellent communication we need to have in place:

- Communication that is open, honest, direct and all-encompassing.
- Employees who are encouraged to speak out about what is important to them and managers who actively listen without judgement.
- Communication channels that work for individuals as well as for the organisation and encourage employee participation.

Fundamental to achieving this it is that the organisation works in conjunction with the Communications Team to bring about the necessary changes.

We are committed to equality and value diversity within our workforce, including direct employees and volunteers. We aim to embed these commitments in our policies, procedures and working practices, and in all our relationships whether with colleagues, service users, communities or partner organisations. We will help our employees to understand and accept their personal responsibility, to recognise and value differences and the contribution that each person makes to the way we deliver our services.

We do not tolerate discrimination, nor do we tolerate either direct or indirect behaviours that are intended to bully, harass, isolate or victimise others for reasons connected to individual differences. We strive to ensure that no one will receive less favourable treatment and everyone will be given the opportunity to grow and flourish.

## **1.1 Our Approach**

The Council Plan states that our approach is to:

“... lead the way for the future of reshaped public services, enriching the lives of our citizens by providing high quality services to all, as well as radically improving outcomes for those most in need, by removing barriers and solving their underlying problems.

We will meet our challenging goals by designing all of our services from a customer perspective accepting that they differ from area to area, community to community. This approach will enable us to work with partners and towards organisational change. This includes posing questions around whether we are the right people to do what we determine is necessary.

We will treat our workforce fairly, with respect and honesty, engaging their passion and talent and growing leaders.”

## **1.2 Strategic Purposes**

The council has six outward facing Strategic Purposes. These are:

- Provide good things for me to do, see, visit
- Keep my place safe and looking good
- Help me run a successful business
- Help me (back) to be financially independent
- Help me live my life independently
- Help me find somewhere to live in my locality

These purposes drive what services we deliver to our customers. There is also one internal Strategic Purpose for enabling services which is:

- Enable others to work / do what they need to do (to meet their Purpose)

### **1.3 Corporate Principles**

The Council Plan contains eight principles which underpin the work that we do going forward to deliver our Strategic Purposes. These are:

1. Design all our services from the customer's perspective to ensure we respond to the needs of our communities;
2. Help people to help themselves where appropriate;
3. Be corporately responsible by ensuring we meet our ethical, environmental and social responsibilities, and that services support our communities to develop;
4. Constantly innovate, to make the best use of our resources to ensure we deliver efficient, quality services and eliminate waste;
5. Make decisions and provide challenge based on data, evidence and learning;
6. Use the Council's unique position in the community to encourage and support change amongst partners and other agencies;
7. Put the customer at the heart of what we do, treating people and issues fairly, with respect and honesty;
8. Identify the best way to work, to satisfy customers' needs, by pushing departmental and organisational boundaries.

Together these principles form the basis of the organisational culture or "how we do business around here", and will impact on the styles of leadership and management adopted by the council.

## **2 HR and OD Strategy Framework**

The HR and OD strategy is structured around the following framework:

- Leadership and Management Development
- HR Policies and Strategies
- Recruitment, Retention and Workforce Planning
- Reward and Recognition
- Health, Safety and Wellbeing
- Performance Management
- Skills Development
- Employee Relations

- Employee Engagement

## **2.1 Leadership and Management Development**

Effective Leadership and Management are strongly valued and recognised as essential to all aspects of the Councils' success. Particularly in terms of enabling clear leadership and direction to take the council forward and to fully engage and support employees. It is therefore critical to the organisations' success that we:

- Enhance the leadership and management capability and skills to develop management styles which enable the organisation to meet the challenges ahead.
- Leaders and managers understand and fulfil their roles in enabling their departments to deliver successful outcomes.
- Fully embrace systems thinking principles and strengthen our managers' skills in this area.
- Strengthen systemic leadership capability to be able to respond to change in an agile and flexible way.
- Facilitate a collaborative, fair and transparent workplace culture where employees are actively engaged and work as one team across directorates and between authorities to deliver Strategic Purposes.
- Support managers to actively manage their teams and employees, taking responsibility and accountability for their role as managers, whilst ensuring that the contribution of employees is valued and appreciated.
- Ensure that there are mechanisms which a) allow employees to try new ways of working without fear of failure and b) encourage creativity in service delivery.

It is essential that the leadership style employed by the authority creates an environment in which managers are able to manage in the new way, supporting employee and encouraging them to try new things.

## **2.2 HR Policies and Strategies**

Policies and strategies are essential to ensure that as an organisation we support and manage employees in a way that is fair, compliant and flexible to meet the needs of the business. To enable this to happen it is important to review policies and strategies to ensure that they are appropriate and necessary going forward.

It is important that these HR policies and strategies support the culture we want to develop and that our employees and managers have the required behaviours and skills to implement them.

## **2.3 Recruitment, Retention and Workforce Planning**

Key to the success of the Council is ensuring that we recruit the right employees, with the right knowledge, skills and attitude to deliver excellent customer care and services to meet the needs of our customers. It is also crucial to plan for the future and retain employees with key skills and knowledge, whilst ensuring that these skills and knowledge are transferred to other employees. To enable us to do this we need to:

- Ensure that our recruitment processes enable us to attract, engage and retain a talented and motivated workforce that is responsive to change.
- Support our employees to fulfil their potential, and ensure that they possess the right skills to meet future needs through access to effective learning and development.
- Undertake succession and workforce planning to predict potential skills gaps, develop and improve the way we work and how we develop our ability to identify the right people, at the right cost with the right skills both for now and the future.

## **2.4 Reward and Recognition**

Reward and recognition is a key issue for both employees and the Council if we are to attract high calibre candidates and motivate employees to deliver sustained high performance. We will work to ensure that we:

- Appreciate and value employees' contributions and achievements, recognising and celebrating successes.
- Continue to ensure our pay processes are fair and equitable across the organisation.
- Review National Terms and Conditions as appropriate in partnership with Trade Union Representatives and develop approaches to reward and recognition which are reflective of where we are going as a business.
- Actively pursue opportunities to provide benefits to employees that allow their salaries to stretch further by the means of a range of enhanced non-pay benefits while recognising the impact of the current economic climate.
- Promote the benefits of working in Local Government.

## **2.4 Health, Safety and Wellbeing**

As an ethical employer, we will continue to provide a safe and healthy working environment that promotes employee well-being. This has the additional benefit of delivering increased job satisfaction, improved morale, employee retention, increased performance and reduced cost of employee absence. We will build on our current health and wellbeing activities by:

- Enhancing the opportunity, where possible, for employees to achieve appropriate work life balance.
- Reviewing relevant policies and processes to support employee wellbeing.
- Promote and deliver appropriate mental wellbeing support to employees. We will do this by using the most current thinking or schemes available to us such as the Five Ways to Wellbeing.
- Regularly monitoring the wellbeing of our employees.
- Continuing to participate in national and local wellbeing initiatives which benefit the wellbeing of our employees

## **2.5 Performance Management**

It is essential that leaders and managers provide a clear sense of direction and purpose at both an organisational and employee level to ensure that employees understand what is expected of them.

It is then critical that performance management is in place as a means of gauging how the organisation is delivering against the strategic purposes at an individual level. As such it is essential and integral to ensuring service delivery. To enable this to happen we will have an agreed approach to short-term and longer-term performance management.

## **2.6 Skills Development**

In order to deliver customer-focussed services both now and in the future, it is important to develop our employees to ensure that they have the skills, knowledge and experience needed. With this in mind it is essential that, with the on-going pressure on budgets and the need to work more flexibly, we find more creative ways to meet the demand for training and development. To achieve this we will:

- Identify current skills and the skills required for the future.
- Ensure that roles and skills are reviewed on a regular basis.
- Put in place flexible and robust training and development plans.
- Look at more sustainable models of training and development going forward.

## **2.7 Employee Relations**

Employee Relations focuses on both individual and collective relationships in the workplace, with an increasing emphasis on helping line managers establish trust-based relationships with employees. Positive employee relations, with high levels of employee involvement, commitment and engagement will help improve the effective delivery of our Strategic Purposes as well as contributing to employees' wellbeing and levels of satisfaction.

In changing times we need to increase the focus on the individual relationships within the organisation. This is because organisational success is becoming increasingly dependent on delivery by employees. This focus is in addition to supporting the relationship that we have with the Trade Unions, and the benefits that this brings to successful employee relations. This will have implications for both HR and OD and for managers.

Skills will now be required within the organisation to carry out consultation and data collection, interpret employee attitudes, spotting early signs of conflict and reaching an early resolution of differences. Managers will need technical and softer skills to be the effective people managers essential to a successful employment relationship. By developing such skills in our managers, we will create greater levels of confidence and competence, enabling them to build a positive employee relations climate to enhance business performance.

The current positive relations with the Trade Unions remain a cornerstone of our employee relations approach and we will continue to work in partnership with the unions as we move the organisation forward.

As a result of the increased focus on individual relationships, employee engagement has become a key part of the employment relationship.

## **2.8 Employee Engagement**

Employee engagement is important as it has a direct impact on the level of discretionary effort that employees are willing to put into their work. It is generally defined as an employee's willingness to go the extra mile, the extent to which they feel valued and the passion they have for their work.

The more our employees feel engaged, the more discretionary effort they will apply and the better their performance will be. This is particularly important giving the changing nature of the local government environment as budgetary restrictions and efficiencies require us to work in a more business-focused manner. Employees will be operating in a different environment which will therefore require them carry out their role in different ways which may require different skills, mind sets and behaviours. We therefore need to:

- Understand the thoughts and feelings of our employees.
- Ensure that there are appropriate mechanisms that are open and accessible to all employees.

- Share findings with employees and take action where appropriate.

### **3 Summary**

The successful delivery of the HR and OD strategy is reliant upon the commitment and engagement corporately of all employees and managers. Whilst all elements of the strategy are important, the order and timescales for moving them forward will vary depending on the needs of the business, and the impact of other changes, internal and external, to the council. The HR and OD Team will help to support and drive through organisational change whilst working collaboratively with Service Areas to bring about the best outcomes for the organisation and for our customers.

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