



# London Borough of Croydon People and Cultural Transformation Strategy 2022 - 2026



## Overview

This four-year strategy aims to enable the delivery of the Mayor's Business Plan and the delivery of the strategic objective 'A transformed council listens to residents and delivers good services', specifically priority four to 'Develop a workforce which respects and delivers for our diverse communities'. We recognise that developing the right culture is essential to delivering the necessary change that sustains transformation and workforce improvement and is something that is raised repeatedly by our staff and members in focus groups, networks, general discussions and in the Crossing the Threshold program.

As part of the Council's wider Transformation programme there are a number of projects that are being developed to improve services and move the Council to a financially sustainable organisation. As part of the success criteria of the overall Transformation programme the projects will include setting criteria to help towards improving the culture that in turn will help to attract and retain staff and drive up service improvement where necessary.

The Council is under a general duty of best value 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 ( section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999) (as amended by Section 137 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007)



## Background

The council has been undertaking considerable work to make workforce improvement under the leadership of the Chief Executive since the Report in the Public Interest 2020. The culture of the council up to that point had been one where there was a lack of inclusive leadership, an organisation working in silos and where senior management was detached from the workforce, with the collective employee voice not listened to sufficiently. Issues of institutional discrimination were also considered to be barriers to equality and inclusion and rigorous efforts have been made over the last two years to address these problems and as set out below: -

- Focus groups – led by CEO/Head of OD in September/October 2020
- Croydon Renewal Plan – engagement with all staff once the plan was submitted through an extensive series of workshops
- Speak up programme working with Old Vic – Guardians’ programme offering staff support and help via a signposting service
- Tea-talks (opportunity for staff to talk directly with CMT) with all Staff Networks and new Staff Networks now set up including under 35’s, mental health and carers’ network
- All-staff webinars led by the Chief Executive with an open questions and answers format
- Crossing the Threshold, culture change programme, to reframe the employment culture to focus on delivering good services for residents and improving employee engagement and productivity. We are committed to acting on what we heard from our staff in the first phase of Crossing the Threshold workshops including senior managers being more visible to staff, with less silo working and having a ‘one team, one council approach’ which is clear feedback from staff

- How important getting this right for staff will be to make Croydon a good place to work, attract talent and retain skills
- Improved governance including internal control boards
- Assurance and delivery to move the culture to one of accountability, openness and transparency, which will improve people management with less conduct issues



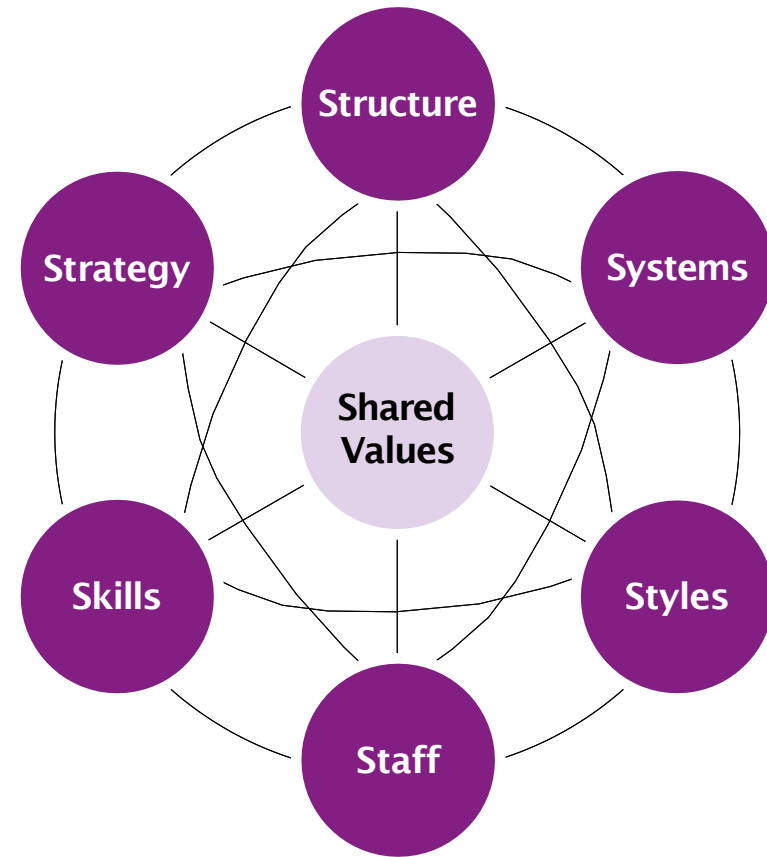
The Council has made significant changes as a result of the Corporate Restructure in 2021 (5 July 2021 Council meeting) giving focus to children’s services, adults and health, and housing. The restructure has been founded on strong people principles, with an emphasis of working as one council and how we have changed as a result of this.

Therefore, the Council has been laying foundations with design aims to ensure the Council can deliver more effectively on its business strategy, address the significant service quality improvements and workplace culture changes required by having focused and sufficient management capacity and ensuring a more consistent, corporate and effective internal control system. The organisational redesign also introduced new roles for senior and other staff to develop more cross-Council roles, role enrichment and development opportunities which this Strategy aims to build upon. Initiatives, such as the Council’s Crossing the Threshold programme, which has been initiated, and is on-going, aims for the Council to become much more transparent, open and honest, i.e. a one-Council organisation, as set out in organisational redesign report.

Integral to talent attraction and management, the chief executive commissioned a positive action-based marketing and recruitment campaign designed to attract a diverse field of applicants as possible, and this work is to be developed and sustained in pillar 2 of this strategy.

The design has referenced the thinking behind the McKinsey “Seven S” model to guide improved ways of working, i.e., the Council must be seen as a whole system and be able to be more than the sum of its parts.

In the implementation of this People Strategy it is essential it is clearly linked and inter-dependent with the Council’s Transformation programme.



## Vision statement

To enable the delivery of the Mayor's Business Plan 2022 -2026, we are committed to providing good quality services by developing our workforce to ensure they are equipped with the right skills, knowledge, and behaviours to serve our residents well. We will develop a culture of putting our residents first, embodying the council's values, which are **One Team, Proud to Serve, Taking Responsibility, Valuing Diversity and Honest and Open**, where we attract a good calibre workforce for local people to live and work. We will develop a Croydon economy making us a desired destination and employer

Through this strategy we aim to be an employer of choice, developing a brand reputation for good service delivery, in tandem with a good employment experience, developing the skills of our people to serve our diverse residents efficiently, effectively, responsively, and courteously.

We aim to attract and retain diverse talent into the council, ensuring our workforce is as reflective as possible of the people of Croydon. This includes employing local people and ensuring our actions as an employer support local economic development and community sustainability.

We will invest in the learning and development of our workforce, equipping them with appropriate skills and solutions examples such as how to deliver good customer care, change and transformation ability, leadership and management whilst working in a digitally led environment.



# Strategic objectives 2022 - 2026

## Key Strategic Aims

1  
Leadership & Management

2  
Equality  
Diversity and  
Inclusion

3  
Health & Wellbeing

4  
Skills & performance

5  
Pay & reward

6  
Talent acquisition  
& management

7  
Employer brand

### People Strategy - 7 Pillars

The successful fruition of the objectives of the seven pillars creates the culture we aspire to.

## Our values

One Team

Taking Responsibility

Proud To Serve

Honest and Open  
Valuing Diversity

Seven key strategic objectives have been developed to provide a framework that addresses the council's workforce needs, enabling through organisational development the council to improve services to residents and setting in place a clear, measurable action plan for the next four years.

## (Pillar 1) Strengthen our leadership and management capabilities.

### Current position

Evidence from the staff survey December 2021 indicated that the council needs to develop and enhance our leadership and management capability.



Leaders are seen by staff as not sufficiently in touch with, and visible to, the workforce, needing to set clear direction listening to the collective employees' voice. This feedback is consistent with that from the first phase of Crossing the Threshold (the council's workforce engagement and culture change programme). From staff survey feedback (see 3.2.1 above) we know managers' capabilities to engage staff with change, and deal with employment-related issues requires strengthening, along with managers' abilities to respond to workforce issues of equality, diversity, and inclusion.

### Future state

Good Leadership consists of , listening, decision making, coaching, collaboration and accountability and performance.

The council aims to develop an inclusive leadership culture, with effective workforce visibility and development of approaches that truly listen to employees' voice, which has commenced through the Crossing the Threshold programme. We will revitalise our values to demonstrate through our behaviours we are embodying those values across the whole workforce, and in serving our residents, which has been a clear message from staff through Crossing the Threshold engagement sessions. There is clear interdependence with other strategic objectives in this regard, especially objectives to:

- build an equality driven, diverse and inclusive workplace,
- prioritise the health, wellbeing and resilience of our staff and
- build our skills and capabilities and optimise our performance.

The action plan at appendix 1 sets out how and when the council will realise this strategic objective, together with measurement of the critical success factors.

## **(Pillar 2) Build an equality driven, diverse and inclusive workplace.**

### **Current position**

Regular analysis of the council's workforce data reveals that more work is required to ensure our staff are representative of the community we serve.

Several key areas for positive action emerge as themes from the analysis of our workforce data: -

- i. Age: the council's median age is 50, with 0.2% of staff under 20, and 2.6% in the age range 18-24. This reveals an ageing workforce profile, which will manifest in future years retention and skills gap issues as the current majority of the workforce is aged between 41-59 and these colleagues will pursue retirement plans over the next 5-15 years.
- ii. Ethnicity: whilst the council's overall ethnicity profile is broadly representative of the borough's demographic, at a senior level from G15 upwards there is a marked difference in the ethnicity profile with a much lower level of Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority senior managers.
- iii. Disability – whilst the council benchmarks favourably in terms of a representative disabled workforce and is in the upper quartile for London boroughs at 9.5%, this falls some way short of the borough demographic of 15%. Moreover, the lived experience of disabled staff in the workforce is another area for improvement to ensure better employee engagement.
- iv. Disclosure – the council benchmarks poorly with other London Boroughs for workforce disclosure of their protected characteristics.

The consequence of this is that without knowing the full profile of the workforce it is difficult to put in place measures that correctly align to support the equality and diversity of the workforce.

### **Future state**

Building on work to date, a workforce EDI dashboard will be presented to the EDI internal control board to analyse the workforce profile and to highlight areas where positive action is needed to address under-representation. The EDI Board will also put in place measures to improve the employees' lived experience when coming from a protected characteristic group working for the council, completing co-creation work with the staff network groups.

The council will develop an inclusive and distributed leadership tool which aims to improve inclusion across the council, improving employees' lived experience. This initiative also enables Pillar one, strengthening the council's leadership capability.

The council aims to develop a workforce that is increasingly representative of the community we serve, as well as enabling an inclusive leadership of the workforce where employees feel they are listened to, respected, able to develop their talents, and recognised for the work they do.

Identify and embed new behaviours and ways of working aligned to Mayoral governance and a hybrid way of working.



**(Pillar 3) Prioritise the health, wellbeing, and resilience of our staff, where staff can thrive and are engaged and motivated to deliver positive outcomes for our diverse communities.**

## Current position

Both hard and soft data indicates that stress-related conditions are increasing across the council, with stress being the most frequent reason for sickness absence. Sickness absence has seen a steady increase across the workforce throughout 2021/22 (over nine days per head per year) and work to address this is being put in place through monthly sickness panels held at Directorate Management Team level. Over the last two years the council has put extensive work into developing initiatives supporting workforce mental health and wellbeing including Mental Health champions, a workforce health and wellbeing group (led by HR and Public Health), Mental Health Tea Talks with CMT, mental health first aiders, a mental health staff network, the Guardians' programme, as a further source of information and support, together with the council's employee assistance programme.

A workforce health and wellbeing strategy has been developed by a cross-section of officers based on the five ways to wellbeing (connect, give, take notice, keep learning and be active) produced by the Mental Health Foundation.

## Future state

Through the implementation of the workforce strategy and action plan we aim for our workforce to be happy, healthy, and supported by the best possible working environment. We are establishing a Workforce Board, led by the CEO, which will include an increased focus on managing sickness absence to ensure we are supporting staff and providing continuity of services to residents. The aim of the workforce health and wellbeing strategy is to create a safe, healthy and 'good work' environment which fosters a culture of positive wellbeing for all its employees.



We aspire to fulfil the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's best practice regarding workforce wellbeing, which is 'to gain real benefit wellbeing must be integrated throughout the organisation, embedded in its culture, its leadership and its people management (CIPD 2019)'

Implement initiatives to address workplace conflict, including a relaunched employee mediation scheme, seeking to resolve any conflict as close to the point of origin as possible and taking best practice from ACAS (Arbitration and Conciliation Advisory Service).

**NB: Industry leads in effective employment relations**

## (Pillar 4) Build our skills and capabilities and optimise our performance.

### Current position

The December 2021 staff survey highlights a number of workforce development areas, including the ability for staff to develop themselves and their careers. The survey data is also supported by feedback from the staff network groups and in particular the Race Equality Network where Black, Asian and minoritised staff report that they are overlooked for professional development and career progression. As Black, Asian, and minoritised staff make up 3Seven% (January 2023) of the workforce (note, where staff have shared their protected characteristic data) this represents a sizeable proportion of the workforce where there is a need to build skills and capabilities to serve our residents.



### Future state

The council will invest in positive action development programmes for protected characteristic staff to ensure an equitable approach to address current and past organisational shortcomings.

We will develop clear career and skills development pathways to ensure a systemic and holistic approach to workforce development which will be aligned to business planning and the fulfilment of the Mayor's Business Plan to optimise performance for residents' benefit.

We aim to be known as an employer that invests in our workforce improving employees' wellbeing, capability, performance, and the council's reputation as an employer. We will redevelop our recruitment landing pages to provide an authentic brand image of the council as a good place to work with footage of diverse staff speaking about their experiences, including continuing professional development, to attract diverse and capable talent.

Develop and roll out a refreshed people performance management and appraisal system aiming to provide the best quality services possible to residents.

## **(Pillar 5) Acquire and retain talent, responding to skills gaps in the context of a more competitive recruitment market.**

### **Current position**

The council, in common with other employers in the hyper-competitive London labour market, experiences challenges with employing several skills scarce occupations across the workforce. This includes qualified social workers (both children's and adults), approval mental health practitioners, digital and ICT specialists, legal, finance, planners, and building control.

The consequence of skills scarcity includes the council needing to take alternative measures to fill statutory services and other business critical roles including the recruitment of agency workers. In financial year 2021/22 the council spent £16m on agency workers and aims to reduce the cost and number involved. Agency staff are respected members of our workforce and approx. 90% of agency staff are filling established posts

### **Future state**

There is close alignment and interdependency with Pillars 4, 6 and 7. The council will aim to develop a more attractive employment value proposition (employment attraction package) to ensure we can recruit and retain good calibre people.

The council will build a pipeline of new talent by developing an apprenticeships strategy, developing clear career and skills pathways to address the underrepresentation of young people in the workforce,

addressing skills gaps in the workforce and improving economic development in the borough to avoid worklessness and generate economic activity. The council will commit to creating apprenticeships through clear organisational design, agreeing annual targets across all directorates to create 'new start' apprentices, as well as apprenticeship conversions which enable the council to develop current staff and draw upon the Government's levy. The council will target Croydon residents to ensure our local population benefit and the council provides community leadership to address worklessness and skills development for residents.

We will develop a range of different resourcing methods to seek to attract diverse and high-quality candidates to work for the council. As covered under Pillar 4 above, we aim to redevelop our recruitment landing pages to provide an authentic brand and compelling package to attract the best candidates possible. We will also implement a values-based approach to recruitment to ensure candidates are assessed on their behavioural values, as well as knowledge, skills, education and aptitude.

We will implement and evaluate different recruiting methods such as greater use of social media, direct sourcing (use of online platforms to make direct contact with potential candidates), candidate open days, and community outreach work, including schools and colleges to attract local people to work for the council (including apprenticeships), with the wider benefit of generating economic activity and development in the community, leveraging the council's position as a major employer in the borough.

In terms of retention there are key interdependencies with Pillar 4 and building workforce skills and capabilities. We will utilise our workforce exit data to pinpoint where we have issues of employee turnover and take targeted actions, including improving employee engagement.

## (Pillar 6) Establish a market leading pay and reward package.

### Current position

The council faces significant challenges in the local, regional, and national labour markets when seeking to recruit, with spiralling pay competitiveness a common feature.

The manifestation of labour market competitiveness, is the council - in skills scarce roles - needing to apply market supplements to be able to provide sufficiency of pay to attract candidates.

The current Greater London Provincial Council job evaluation scheme has been in place for over 30 years and can present difficulties in matching the labour market going rate and modern local government operating models when it comes to pay and grade determination.



The council has two different job evaluation schemes (GPLC and Hay depending on grade seniority), over 1,000 different job descriptions, and historic complexity regrading pay, grading, and determining job value.

All of the above indicates the need for a strategic pay review, including an equality pay audit. Additionally, we need to develop a simpler, transparent pay and reward system that is more flexible and adaptive to prevailing external labour market conditions, as well as being clear and easily understood across the internal workforce.

### Future state

The council will conduct a strategic pay review which will seek to simplify and make transparent the approach to job value, pay and rewards. The review will aim to benchmark the council against the external labour market to ensure pay and reward is competitive, whilst also being affordable within the council's overall pay bill.

The council will align pay and grading systems and structures with skills paths and career progression to ensure a systematic approach to succession planning and talent development alongside pay and compensation, that supports effective recruitment and retention, as well as individual and organisational development.

The council will review options for simplification and modernisation of its job evaluation schemes, rationalising the mechanics of the job evaluation process and job descriptions, to unify the approach and provide improved transparency for all staff to understand how the scheme works and how job value is evaluated.

We will implement a total rewards statement to make clear Croydon's employment offer, to build our employer brand and to support effective recruitment and retention.

## (Pillar 7) Develop an employer brand to attract employees who share the Council's values

### Current position

Given the recent past of the council and its continuing financial difficulties, attraction and successful recruitment of candidates in several skills scarce occupations can be even more challenging, added to which we are seeking to respond to the hyper-competitive London labour market. As well as developing a four-year apprenticeships strategy (see 3.6.3 above) to attract younger people to work for the council an analysis of workforce data and pay gap reports show that there is an underrepresentation of young people (only 2 % of the workforce is under 24). In senior grades there is a shortfall of Black, Asian and minoritized staff (10% v 40% for the wider workforce).



Recruitment experts have dubbed 2022 the 'great resignation' which means staff are much more inclined to leave their employer given external pressures such as the cost-of-living crisis, 40-year high inflation rates, and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and successive lockdowns and associated economic turbulence. It is essential to put clear recruitment plans in place and ensure we have effective talent management that attracts new skills into the council. We are also building social values embedded in the council's contracts to leverage our supplier relationships to help us to work

with the private sector for the wider prosperity and sustainability of the whole borough. For example, we are working with Adecco and Croydon Works to ensure wider economic development and improved life chances for the young people of our borough.

Our staff are effective ambassadors of working for the council however we know from staff survey results and staff exit survey data not all hold a positive view and experience of working for the council. We need to address employee engagement, and this is interdependent with, and covered in, pillars 1 to 6 above to ensure our staff act as our employment advocates.

### Future state

Develop a values-based employer brand incorporating total pay and reward and external accreditations to demonstrate real progress with our employment offer and an authentic employer brand based on external assessment. Market the attraction of Croydon as a place to live and work, including

- fast and efficient transport infrastructure
- affordable housing (compared with central London), which is multi-cultural and diverse,
- where there is true employee voice,
- where we have hybrid working and good office accommodation
- we aim to develop defined career paths

We have external accreditations that provide independent verification of Croydon as a good employer, including issues of overall people management as well as more specifically for equality, diversity, and inclusion.